

160TH BERGEDORF ROUND TABLE

Beijing, 28–30 October 2015

THE GLOBAL ORDER IN TRANSITION

KÖRBER FOUNDATION
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

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Executive Summary

- China has turned into a global actor and a responsible stakeholder in many fields. However, there are still significant differences between Chinese and Western understandings of world order.
- Cooperation between China and the West is still hampered by mutual distrust based mainly on a lack of understanding of each other's perspective.
- Whereas the Chinese participants urged Europe to adopt a stronger role as a mediator between Beijing and Washington, Westerners were critical of Chinese restraint during efforts to overcome international conflicts.
- Despite growing tensions between the US and China, the emergence of a new bipolar world order dominated by Washington and Beijing (the G2) remains a realistic scenario. In a G2 world, Europe would be faced with the critical challenge of asserting itself as a relevant actor if it were to continue shaping the international agenda.

Different concepts of order in China and Europe

The rise of emerging powers in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, the strengthening of non-state actors and the disintegration of statehood, particularly in the Middle East and Africa, has shaken the current global order. In fact, levels of disorder have increased so much that the world seems to have been knocked “out of joint”. The participants of the 160th Bergedorf Round Table in Beijing mostly agreed that this situation was leading questions to be raised about the validity of international standards and procedures, many of which had been considered immutable in the past.

During the debate, it became apparent that fundamental differences existed between the perceptions and approaches adopted by

Western and Chinese discussants. Some participants argued that these differences had resulted in the lack of trust that currently existed on both sides. Importantly, however, distrust was said to be more strongly linked to a lack of understanding of the other side's perspective than to differing conceptions of order.

The Peace of Westphalia provides the foundation for today's international order which is based on the principles of state sovereignty and equality, as well as the essence of the European state order. Moreover, despite the numerous crises that have shaken Europe, the European state

“BOTH SIDES LACK AN UNDERSTANDING OF EACH OTHER'S PERSPECTIVE.”

system remains in place today. Some participants contended that this remarkable level of resilience had led to the claims about the universality of Western values and Western understandings of international order; crucially, however, they stated that this view disregarded the historical contexts of other regions.

“THE CHINESE PRINCIPLE OF *He* STANDS FOR PEACE AND STABILITY THROUGH HARMONY.”

One Chinese participant pointed out that the Confucian principle of *He* stood in diametrical opposition to Western understandings of order: *He*, the participant maintained, represented peace and stability through harmony. Some Chinese participants continued by stating that the West had enforced the implementation of the current system through the subjugation of smaller states. In contrast, China had always sought a balance between its interests and those of its neighbors, as doing so was fundamental to promoting prosperity and stability. Other Chinese participants described the West as trapped within a zero-sum approach. They argued that this automatically led the West to view China’s rise as a threat to Western supremacy, and reorganization of the international system as detrimental to Western interests. They closed by depicting these assumptions as blatant misinterpretations of Chinese interests.

Dealing with Disorder

The participants agreed that there were fundamental differences between the (security) policy challenges faced in and around Europe and those affecting the Asia-Pacific region. Whereas the debate in the Asia-Pacific

was dominated by territorial disputes in the South and East China seas, Europe was said to be confronted with a variety of crises: Greece remained unstable, the conflict in Ukraine had yet to be solved, and the number of refugees seeking protection in Europe was continually rising.

Nevertheless, some of these ongoing international challenges were viewed as providing various points of contact between Chinese and European interests. Several participants maintained that this was especially evident in the case of the Middle East, as both China and Europe shared a key interest in combating Islamist terrorism, and IS in particular.

Despite the convergence of interests in certain areas, significant differences were expressed when it came to overcoming ongoing crises. Given the tensions in the South and East China seas, the Chinese participants reiterated their desire that Europe increasingly adopt the role of an intermediary in relations between China and the United States. Western participants, in contrast, called on the leadership in Beijing to accept the growing importance of the Responsibility to Protect. The international community, they maintained, had a duty to intervene in states in the Middle East that were faced with collapse. Some participants linked the diametrically opposed approaches to the Responsibility to Protect to the debate about the varying concepts of world order. European integration and the associated partial relinquishment of national sovereignty demonstrated that Europe had abandoned the Westphalian framework to a certain degree. Thus, Europe had moved towards a post-Westphalian

“EUROPE SHOULD ADOPT THE ROLE OF AN INTER-MEDIARY IN RELATIONS BETWEEN CHINA AND THE UNITED STATES.”

order, in which the principle of the Responsibility to Protect constituted a fundamental component. In contrast, Chinese participants rejected the Responsibility to Protect in favor of the principles of state sovereignty and non-interference. In addition, they maintained that this showed that their actions were more in accordance with the spirit of the Westphalian order than those of their Western counterparts.

Concerning a possible mission in Syria, the Chinese participants pointed out that any intervention undertaken by Chinese peacekeepers would have to be supported by a UN mandate if it were to be in accordance with international law. Nevertheless, other participants highlighted the inconsistencies in this regard when it came to the Chinese leadership's approach to the situation in the South China Sea. Beijing's aggressive stance was said to demonstrate the divergences that existed between Chinese rhetoric and the country's policy approach. Lastly, this situation was regarded as fostering Western fears that

“CHINA HAS DEVELOPED INTO A RESPONSIBLE STAKEHOLDER IN MANY FIELDS.”

China might seek to impose its regional supremacy through military force.

Some Western participants stressed that Beijing had developed into a responsible stakeholder in many fields. The Chinese leadership's extensive support

of future UN peace missions and the billions of dollars it had promised in aid to the poorest countries during the 70th UN General Assembly were viewed as examples of China playing a constructive international role. China's position during the negotiations on the nuclear agreement with Iran, as well as the country's stance on North Korea's nuclear program, they argued, confirmed that Beijing had taken on a central role as an international mediator.

The Economic and Financial Order: Coexistence or Competition?

Global interdependency was viewed as particularly prominent within the financial and economic systems. As economic crises occurred transnationally, the participants argued, intergovernmental cooperation was essential if crises were to be overcome; this, they maintained, had been recently confirmed by the post-2008 financial crises. Nevertheless, one participant stressed that enhanced cooperation need not automatically result in deeper integration.

Various participants stated that whereas the United States had previously been able to assume the undisputed leadership position in the financial sector, there was currently no such hegemon that could steer the financial



system and act as lender of last resort. Moreover, neither the US nor China was in the position to take on this role by themselves. The participants continued by arguing that the euro, US dollar and increasingly the renminbi

“THERE IS NO LONGER A SINGLE HEGEMON IN THE FINANCIAL SECTOR THAT COULD ACT AS THE LENDER OF LAST RESORT.”

constituted the anchors of the stable global monetary and financial system. Accepting the renminbi into the International Monetary Fund’s currency basket had high symbolic value and represented a further step towards Chinese integration into the global economic and financial order.

The participants believed that insufficient focus has been placed on China’s growing fiscal and economic importance. In response to the rigid structures of the Bretton Woods financial institutions and the inability to adopt international financial reforms the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the BRICS’ New Development Bank were created in 2015. A number of participants raised concerns that these young institutions would not only be extremely costly for their members but that they could also lead to the development of a competing world order. The Chinese participants countered this view by portraying the new institutions as complementary to existing ones. Moreover, they reiterated that Beijing had no intention of creating a rival order and merely wished to strengthen specific areas of its institutions where existing organizations no longer met the expectations of the current balance of power. One participant likened the need for reform of the global order to computer updates: computers required regular updates to ensure that they were kept abreast of changing circumstances, and to guarantee their

continued functioning. Whether these different institutions will actually develop in a complementary manner or in competition to one another remains to be seen.

Cooperation Founded on Trust?

Which forms of international cooperation will dominate the future world order? Who will set the rules in the future? And, how can trust between China and the West be (re)established?

It remained unclear which form of international cooperation would dominate in the future. Some participants predicted a strengthened G2 format under which China and the US would coordinate international issues of common interest. Although this would require concessions from both sides, the benefits of closer cooperation were expected to outweigh the potential negative aspects. One European discussant agreed that a G2 scenario would be more desirable than a confrontation between the two great powers. However, if Europe were to continue influencing the global agenda, it would have to become more actively involved at the international level. Other participants believed that a cooperative international system could no longer be based on duality as it had been during the

Cold War. Instead, they argued that a cooperative international order now required a multi-polar system. They pointed out that many governments no longer merely chose between the US or China when searching for a strategic partner, but focused on the various

“A G2 SCENARIO IS MORE DESIRABLE FOR EUROPE THAN A CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE US AND CHINA.”

states with which they held common interests. Asian countries, such as Korea, Japan, and the Philippines, for example, all of which are long-term partners of the US, were not only interested in developing economic ties with China, rather they intended to do so without limiting their right to security cooperation with the US.

Whether new rules will develop in the future and, if so, who will be able to define them remained to be seen. China was viewed as focused on attempts to reinforce the G20 to increase its own political strength and international influence. The G20 secured emerging powers greater scope, and this

could allow China to take on a special role. Hence, strengthening the G20 might enable the leadership in Beijing to develop a contrasting voice to the G7.

Finally, mistrust between China and the West posed a particular challenge to the international order. This situation had arisen from the lack of clearly formulated interests on both sides, which had made it difficult to predict the opposing side's approach, and had resulted in rivalry instead of dialogue. The participants closed by pointing out that regular contact and cooperation were essential if trust between China and the West were to be strengthened in the long term.



Speech by the German Federal Chancellor, Angela Merkel, at the Bergedorf Round Table, 29 October 2015

Minister Guo,
Mr. Paulsen,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Participants, both the familiar faces and,
of course, the new ones,

What is so fascinating about the Bergedorf Round Table is that it encourages us to view the world through other people's eyes. This certainly applies to today's discussions about the pressing problems of our time and while sharing opinions about the most appropriate responses. I am very pleased to have the opportunity to do this here in Beijing – all the more so, because our discussions are focused on nothing less than the current world order, and they are taking place against the background of the rise of emerging powers such as China, our host country.

You cannot talk about China in a few words. I hope the following will suffice: although clear economic disparities continue to exist in China, the country has long since grown into the world's second-largest economy. As a result, China expects the international order to reflect the shifting balance in the world's economy. This specifically includes making changes to the global financial architecture, but it also goes further than this.

China has taken significant steps in this respect. I only need to mention the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the BRICS' New Development Bank. There was a clear debate in Germany about whether we should join the AIIB: we decided to do so. Germany is now the bank's largest non-Asian shareholder. Among other issues, we have stressed the

importance of and worked towards ensuring the AIIB adheres to common international standards.

Nevertheless, this raises a fundamental question: should the international system, which is based on multilateral institutions, really be duplicated? Now that we have the World Bank, the AIIB, and the IMF, will something else develop in the future? Do regional aspects have a role to play? Even if they do, we need to recognize that the AIIB has adopted quite far-reaching ambitions. I might add that this is partly because existing institutions have become static and are currently incapable of expanding. It would be difficult to gain agreement to provide further funds to the World Bank, and garnering the support of the United States would be particularly challenging. Besides, quota reform within the IMF is taking such a long time: we agreed on this issue in 2010, and it has yet to be implemented.

Germany joined the AIIB because we believe that existing institutions and organizations need to give due regard to China. We would not want to see parallel institutions emerging where, again, only some countries are represented. Clearly though, the question of how the multilateral order should be structured is as interesting as it is fascinating. In this regard, the Chinese participants need to state whether they wish to see a fundamental renewal of the current system, which I imagine they perceive as a Western system, whether they intend to build a parallel structure by themselves, or whether recent developments will remain an exception. Whatever

happens, increasing levels of global interdependence mean that the system of multilateral governance will have to be improved. The current array of interdependencies means that regional institutions are only capable of adopting appropriate roles in particular circumstances, whereas many situations really do require global institutions.

Of course, the world sees today's stronger China through different eyes; it partly looks to the country with extremely high expectations, and partly with concern. "The Chinese Dream" is a vision for China. Nevertheless, the frictions in Asia become apparent when listening to representatives from other Asian states. We believe a broad dialogue is, therefore, essential. If we are to live together peacefully, we need trust and understanding; and it is only through communication, only through talking to one another, that trust and understanding can grow.

In another context, China can be described as having purposely established itself as an influential world player. This is particularly the case when it comes to climate policy. Economic development has led China to become one of the major emitters of carbon dioxide. However, to my knowledge, China was also the first developing country to accept that a peak emission level will have to be reached at some point in the future, and that, consequently, it will have to reduce its carbon dioxide emissions. This is a bold move. We realize that the two-degree target cannot be achieved unless countries such as China ensure that their current commitments lead to real reductions. Responsibility is indeed shared, but it is perceived differently.

In 2017, China is due to introduce an emissions trading system. This is a significant step, and its introduction will keep us occupied in Europe for some time. In fact, the emission

trading system could result in a number of synergies. Furthermore, China has developed a new approach: it is contributing 20 billion yuan towards a fund aimed at enabling developing countries to implement climate change mitigation and adaptation. In the past, the Group of 77 and China were mentioned in the same breath. The G77 consisted of a large group of states that viewed themselves as developing countries. China has now adopted a new role. During the run-up to the Gavi conference at the beginning of the year, I asked China to contribute – even if only symbolically – towards the Vaccine Alliance. And China did participate in the alliance. Clearly then, we are observing a change, from China as a recipient country, so to speak, to a donor country. Hence, China is gaining influence and a stronger voice in many fields.

The same applies to foreign and security policy. As a permanent member of the Security Council with veto rights, China has always played a central role in world affairs. China has evident foreign policy commitments, such as in North Korea when it comes to that country's nuclear program. Several years ago, China helped initiate the six-party talks, and without China, these discussions will not be resumed. Therefore, China could play a key role when it comes to asserting stronger influence over North Korea; in turn, this could help mitigate tensions on the Korean Peninsula and reduce the likelihood of military incidents.

China was also a highly active partner during the negotiations over the nuclear agreement with Iran. These discussions certainly produced a successful outcome, but the process lasted for more than ten years. Despite this, a solution was still found.

During today's talks with Premier Li Keqiang, I spoke about China's role in Afghan-

istan. China shares a border, albeit a small one, with Afghanistan. It also has very close relations with Pakistan. In turn, Pakistan has relatively strong influence over, or at least contacts to, the Taliban. We too would like to help bring about a political solution to this matter. China's good contacts to Pakistan and Afghanistan, therefore, could help contribute towards reconciliation. This, for example, is one of our expectations. Moreover, as Germany is currently home to relatively high numbers of Afghan refugees, and Afghanistan shares a border with China, our interests are directly linked, irrespective of the considerable geographical distance that separates our two countries.

Africa, Europe's neighbor, is also of great interest to China. In fact, I think that one of the first international missions that China contributed towards was the UN's mission to combat piracy. I doubt very much that this was a coincidence. China views itself as a major trading nation, and it understands that secure trade routes are of the utmost importance. This view harks back to China's seafaring past and the importance the country continues to accord to strategic points. The Horn of Africa is a strategic point for journeys undertaken by sea, and the current situation in the South China Sea is also linked to particular strategic points.

China is on board when it comes to the robust peacekeeping mission in Mali. China is also on board when it comes to efforts to broker a peace agreement in Sudan and South Sudan. Moreover, at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit, China announced that it would be making 8,000 police officers available for international peacekeeping efforts. This is undoubtedly a huge contingent. Furthermore, China is to provide €100 million of financing to the African Un-

ion's Standby Force. These commitments also reflect the European view that it is impossible to maintain a presence in every region that is currently afflicted by conflict. In fact, we do not even always understand enough about the culture of the countries concerned to do so. Nonetheless, we can help people to resolve regional conflicts by themselves, and I believe that, in cases such as these, Chinese and European security initiatives can be complementary.

Of course – and this is something that we have spoken about today – we are particularly worried by the ongoing war in Syria. Russia's intervention has further intensified the conflict, and this has led to more migration, in particular, in and around Aleppo. However, I noted from our conversations that most people believe that a political and diplomatic process is the only way of securing a settlement. There is also remarkable agreement on the importance of ensuring that all relevant stakeholders are involved in the process; this includes Russia, the United States, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran and other parties at the local level. Some progress has been made towards developing the appropriate format. I do hope that this leads to a positive outcome.

Clearly then, China regularly provides assistance when it comes to refugee crises. Moreover, China does so by relying on international organizations. We also regularly put our trust in these institutions, whether it is the United Nations, the UN Refugee Agency, or many others. We need to strengthen these organizations. And, we should treat the reports that the World Food Programme, the UNHCR, and other relevant UN organizations are chronically underfunded, as terrible, if not shameful, news.

Everyone agrees that international law

must be respected. Abiding by international law is essential if the international system built around the UN is to function properly. At the same time, doing so constitutes a primary means of building trust. During Germany's painful historical experiences of Nazism and the First World War, we learned that it is essential that countries maintain their voluntary commitments to international institutions and abide by the rules; any deviation from this principle is unacceptable. Similarly, international standards need to be determined multilaterally, and should never be changed arbitrarily.

This has also led us to conduct intense discussions with China about the issue of Ukraine. China is a staunch advocate of the principle of territorial integrity, and I greatly appreciate its position. In fact, we hope that this point will be stated more openly in the future, as it could indeed be clearer. Current developments in Ukraine provide a reason for some hope, even if there is still a long way to go. Nonetheless, the annexation of Crimea was and remains a violation of territorial integrity, and is, therefore, wholly unacceptable.

The territorial dispute in the South and East China Sea, which is being carefully monitored throughout the world, presents an additional challenge. Thus, and I have spoken about this quite often, it is particularly astonishing that multinational courts are not viewed as offering a valid solution. Instead, people are saying, "we want to solve this bilaterally," and this argument is continually repeated despite China's frequent calls for stronger acceptance of international institutions. In this context, we hope that maritime trading routes will remain open and safe; this is imperative for the entire region and beyond.

China is currently developing a highly strategic policy that takes the long-term perspective into account. Long-term thinking is something that sometimes passes us by in Europe, although this is partly due to the short time span between elections. Nevertheless, I view long-term strategic thinking as essential, even to the extent that it means taking a leaf out of the history books. To understand politics, we sometimes need to avoid judging the past by today's standards. Moreover, we need to try to understand the wider picture and thus build bridges between different periods. The Silk Road initiative – consisting of the Silk Road maritime and continental initiatives – is a good example of this. At first glance, the diverse work undertaken by the Chinese government seems fragmentary, but the issue of the Silk Road crops up again and again in many areas.

The Silk Road initiative is aimed at securing Eastern European countries with better ties to Asia, and Central Asian states with better connections to Europe. The European Union has developed a response, but I have found it quite difficult to get used to its name. How can a term such as "connectivity platform" really compete with "Silk Road"? Our term will definitely take some getting used to. That is why I intend to continue referring to the initiative as the Silk Road; there is something historical about this phrase, and it has a beautiful ring to it. Still, both terms refer to the same thing: the infrastructure that exists along the route of the Silk Road, and the debate that is associated with it. The European Union also intends to ensure that it too is involved.

I would like to use this opportunity, however, to make a point. China occasionally forms groups within the European Union with which it then develops specific formats

for cooperation. This sometimes occurs with Central and Eastern European countries, occasionally with southern European states, and partly even with candidate countries that have yet to gain EU member status. I would like to point out that it is just as possible to engage with the entire European Union. Of course, I understand that it may be interesting for China to learn more about the subtle differences between Europeans. And, we are also to blame when it comes to the fact that Europe is still unable to speak with a single voice.

I believe that the examples that I have cited demonstrate that China's unyielding development, which was focused primarily on internal structures, has led the country to become increasingly involved in the global order. China initially concentrated on eradicating poverty and building its economy and infrastructure; this process continued for many years. During this time, China's involvement in the global order steadily intensified, and in my view, the country perceived its participation in world affairs in highly strategic terms. China's engagement with the global order was also reliant on the extensive time budgets provided for foreign travel to China's political leaders. Close to the date of the G20 summit in Australia, the Chinese President visited some of the islands in the Indian Ocean. Perhaps I could also describe them as the islands between Australia and China. Xi Jinping actually stayed for quite a while. In contrast, if the German Chancellor were to remain in Fiji for two days, people would probably become suspicious and question whether she had nothing else to do at home. I was very impressed by the fact that the president of a country with 1.3 billion inhabitants specifically visited a smaller partner and took the time to study its culture

and customs. If Europeans truly want to understand the world, we also need to ask ourselves whether we always adopt the correct approach. However, this should not be taken as implying that I will now be looking for a way to spend time in Fiji.

I have set out my views on the issue of China's role and the world order. I believe that there are many similarities between Chinese and European interests; there are, of course, a number of differences. At the same time, the Chinese government's positions are clearly linked to those adopted by the United States. Europe, then, is not the center of the world – we realize this – but we remain a strong partner in many circumstances.

I would like to conclude by emphasizing that I strongly appreciate the fact that China proved to be a reliable partner during the euro crisis. The crisis clearly demonstrated the enormous advantages of long-term thinking. In today's hectic times, long-term thinking, which is also deployed in economic institutions, has significant benefits because it promises reliability and staying power. I spoke today with Premier Li Keqiang about Ireland's high growth rate, that Portugal is back on track, and that Spain is on the right path. I believe that investments have proven worthwhile and that this is also understood to have been the case from the Chinese perspective. If China had stopped purchasing euro area assets during the crisis, an entirely different picture of development would have emerged throughout the world. In this respect, staying power and thinking strategically were tremendously helpful. This is something that we too could indeed learn from.

I look forward to the discussion.

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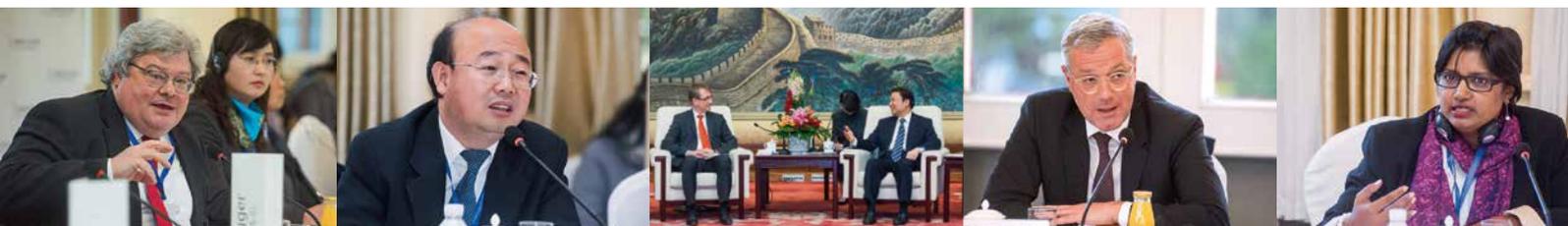
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International Dialogue

For over 50 years, the Körber Foundation has been committed to international understanding and dialogue across political, national and religious boundaries. It helps to overcome the absence of discussion, to build bridges and to initiate debate.

The foundation strengthens constructive dialogue with dialogue formats, competitions, encounters and networks – open-ended, on equal terms and transparently. In doing so, it focuses on diversity. In keeping with the motto “Talk to, not about each other” the goal is to bring as many of the relevant actors to the table as possible. The Körber Foundation sheds light on the historical aspects of current conflicts and highlights perspectives for overcoming them. It examines different identities and promotes a culture of mutual recognition. It sounds out the scope for political action and shows practically orientated ways of working together. In this way the Körber Foundation contributes to the identification of common values and interests and to the building of trust.

The target groups of the Körber Foundation are social thought leaders, (foreign) political decision-makers and multipliers of international understanding. It places particular emphasis on strengthening the capacity for dialogue of decision-makers in the next generation. The programmes of the Körber Foundation concentrate geographically on Eastern Europe and the role of Russia in the European context, as well as the regional conflicts in the Middle East and China as a global player.



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